

SIERRA LEONE LAUNCHES FIRST NATIONAL ONE HEALTH PLATFORM IN WEST AFRICA



Attendees of the Sierra Leone National One Health Platform Launch ceremony on June 23, 2017 included Sierra Leone Vice President, Victor Bockarie Foh, the Hon. MOHS - Dr. Abubakarr Fofanah, Hon. MAFFS – Monty Jones, Hon. Executive Chair EPA - Mrs. Haddijatou Jallow, the Dir. ONS – Sheriff Tarashid Tarawali, Secretary General, Mano River Union - Medina Wesseh and representatives from US Embassy and USAID – Irene Koek, Richard Greene, Dorothy Preprah, Kendra Chittenden, Saad Hassan, and P&R West Africa, WHO and EPT-2 partners.

"As a country, we now have an Inter-Ministerial One Health Committee, with multi-sectoral One Health Coordination and Technical Committees already established. In order to facilitate and enhance this inter-departmental partnership, a Memorandum of Understanding will shortly be developed between the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security and other relevant Institutions.

– Victor Bockarie Foh, Vice President of Sierra Leone

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On June 23, 2017, Sierra Leone launched a National One Health Platform (NOHP) in collaboration with the U.S. Government and the P&R project. This launch formalized a collaboration between four key government sectors in Sierra Leone, including the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS) and the Environment Protection Agency (EPA). The event was presided over by the Hon. Vice-President and attended by a representative from the US Embassy to Sierra Leone, country government officials and partners from USAID and the CDC, among others.

The platform launch took place following the ECOWAS Regional Inter-ministerial meeting on One Health in Abuja, Nigeria and marked the first of its kind in the West African region. Since April 2016, the P&R project has been providing continuous technical guidance and advocacy to One Health leadership in Sierra Leone through local and regional office staff in West Africa. To ensure sustainability, the platform will be legally anchored within the National Institute for Public Health (NIPH), which is being established.

Sierra Leone's Hon. Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, Monty Jones, noted that, there has been a relationship between humans and animals since the days of the bible. He also noted that the climate has triggered over 15 diseases that are being transmitted from animals to humans, and that there is an urgent need for laboratories to detect these diseases. He also stressed the need for additional veterinary services in Sierra Leone.

The Hon. Minister of Health and Sanitation, Dr. Abu Bakarr Fofanah informed that the recent Ebola virus outbreak clearly highlighted the link between animal and public health and the importance of veterinary and medical sectors working in a coordinated manner. He then reiterated that the One Health approach represented a powerful framework based on the understanding that human, animal and environmental health are all interlinked and require a coordinated approach.

Following the Vice President's keynote address, the Ministers of Agriculture, and Health and Head of EPA, signed-off on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for multisector collaboration to prevent, detect and respond to public health threats including pandemic threats.

The signing of the institutional collaboration framework and the MOU, as well as the appointment of individuals to the OH-TWG and NOHP committees signified the completion of the platform institutionalization process. The next steps will be the mobilization of all necessary support from stakeholders for a strong and operational NOHP in Sierra Leone.